



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 7, 2005

VETERANS, YOUNG SOLDIERS SHARE CAMARADERIE AT BATTLE OF THE BULGE COMMEMORATIONS

By Staff Sgt. Manuel Torres-Cortes
V Corps Public Affairs Office

CLERVAUX, Luxembourg — Sixty years ago, American Soldiers and their allies fought one of the toughest battles of World War II here in the rolling hills of the Ardennes.



STAFF SGT MANUEL TORRES-CORTES

World War II reenactors in period uniforms with a war-era jeep take part in commemorations of the 60th anniversary of the World War II Battle of the Bulge.

Known to history as the Battle of the Bulge, the siege involved more than half a million troops. More than 18,000 lost their lives and 57,000 were wounded, captured or missing in action.

While the battle lasted only about three months on the ground, it continues to this day in the hearts and minds of those who fought here, many of whom recently returned to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Bulge.

During a week of events in Belgium and Luxembourg, members of the American and Belgian armed forces joined with local citizens and leaders in paying tribute to those who pushed the German Third Reich from their fields and towns.

Throughout the week, lavish ceremonies, dedications and presidential treatment honored those who fought to free Europe. Many of the veterans who came here were returning for the first time in 60 years, to see the places where they fought and bled, and to see first-hand what their sacrifices had accomplished.

Most of all, they came to honor those who gave their lives in that struggle.

It was also an opportunity for some of those veterans to share very personal memories of the Bulge, stored in their hearts and minds for six decades.

"The ceremonies and the way the Luxembourg and Belgium people are treating us is just overwhelming," said Ethal Bearisto, wife of Bulge veteran William Bearisto of Wathan, Mass. "Every day is an emotional day, for the both of us."

Bearisto served as a forward observer in the 109th Field Artillery Battalion here. As his battalion fought fiercely to halt the enemy's Ardennes offensive, the Germans overran a nearby bridge. While his unit fell back to the other side of the bridge Bearisto was shot in the foot. He managed to keep moving until he reached a hotel near Clervaux, where he was later captured and sent to a prisoner of war camp in Germany.

Although she had never met William, Ethal was a friend of his sister at the time he was captured. She says she went to church every day with his sister to pray for his safe return. When he returned to America, they finally met, and married soon after.

"The things we did then and the things we are doing now are a job that is necessary," said William Bearisto. "Even though it might be tough, those are the things that have to happen because you have to always keep America strong."

That pride in doing what had to be done was apparent in the many veterans who came to the commemorations here with chests out and heads held high.

Some met here for the first time, even though they had been assigned to the same units 60 years ago. As they looked over displays of World War II artifacts such as field rations, boots, shovels, weapons and even vehicles, they talked and shared their stories about how the gear was put to use in combat here.

Veteran William D. Tucker traveled from Harrison, Penn. to be here. Tucker was a member of the 514th Field Artillery Battalion of Gen. George S. Patton's 3rd Army. After fighting in the D-Day landing in Normandy, Tucker later found himself at the Battle of the Bulge a day after Christmas.

Looking over a World War II-era jeep, Tucker said, brought back an incident of 60 years ago "like it was yesterday." He recalled losing control of his own similar beast on an icy cliff near Bastogne, Belgium and tossing the comrade riding with him from the vehicle. Tucker said he was sure his friend had been killed, but instead his unlucky passenger got up laughing and joking.

"I modified that jeep to fix every accommodation that we needed," said Tucker.

"I had to communicate with the headquarters, so I had to have three radios mounted in the jeep."

In the exhibits veterans saw things that were once a part of their lives and younger Soldiers saw ancient artifacts.

"I can't believe some of the things these Soldiers used," said Cpl. Rodney J. Edwin of Headquarters, United States Army Europe. "It's so amazing to see these guys here now and the things they used to use for war."

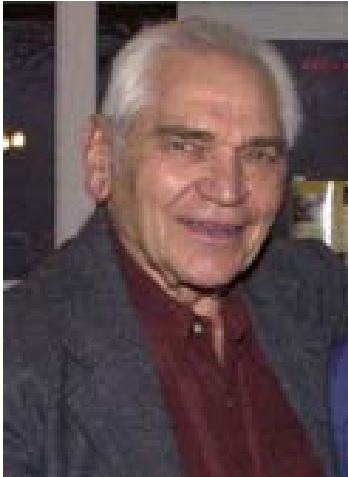
The display was put together by one of the locals' own, Jerry Streitz, who collects World War II artifacts from Luxembourg and Belgium. Streitz said he found nearly all the weapons in old farmhouses in Luxembourg, but added that the items weren't as important as the story of the dedication of those who used them.

"We never want to forget what American Soldiers did for us," said Streitz. "Finding artifacts lets us know what really happened in those battles where they were fighting, but finding personal effects lets us know what the Soldiers went through when they were fighting."

The display brought back memories and old feelings as well.

Julius Goldin came to Belgium in late 1944 as a first generation American and a dentist with the 402nd Field Artillery Group, 8th Corps Artillery. He was reminded of that last visit here as he looked over the artifacts.

"I have very mixed feelings while I am here; one of reverence (and) remembrance -- and amazement that I am still here at 88," he said.



STAFF SGT MANUEL TORRES-CORTES
Julius Goldin, 88, was a captain and dentist with the 402nd Field Artillery Group when he first came to the Ardennes for the Battle of the Bulge 60 years ago. Goldin said while his generation was called 'the greatest generation,' today's generation deserves the title.

Most of all, Goldin remembered the relationships he had, particularly with his two brothers, who were also in the service during the war. He bumped into one of them at the Bulge. One of them, he says, got a battlefield commission because there was no one else left to lead his unit.

Goldin said he got a hero's welcome here, but his thoughts were with the Soldiers who did not make it back.

"I am here to memorialize the events and to finally come to grips with what we did at that time," he said. "Heroics have nothing to do with it. I am just lucky that most of the blows were on the artillery battalion in front of us."

While he remembered the friends and comrades who fell here, Goldin spoke to today's Soldiers, saying they are making sacrifices just as great as those who fought in World War II. Perhaps greater, he said, because they are volunteers.

"We were called up. Everyone was drafted, and they call us the 'greatest generation,' and that doesn't mean anything to me. Your generation can be the greatest generation," he said. "I will not be able to understand the world (today's) service members are living in and the type of dangers you face at home and abroad. You

have a nuclear threat; a threat of economics, where you struggle to exist, and the threat of abandonment where the citizens of the U.S. do not fully support or believe in the mission. You are not a conscripted army -- you're a volunteer army -- and you are asked to extend yourselves, as I see it, well beyond your physical selves."

Goldin said he gives his full support to the Soldiers fighting in the desert, as he and his comrades fought here in the ice and snow 60 winters ago.

"With the complexities of their lives being so great, I can only feel for them and cry for them ... I personally (have) seen too much death. I want each Soldier to make it home in one piece. ... They are fighting for their lives and the people they protect," he added. "Please stay strong and young. Come home and have fun."

